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ABSTRACT

The transition from education into the world of work that leads to career success is in some part dependent on the nontechnical work skills developed by students and the extent to which they can demonstrate those skills on the job. Research by Brauchle, Petty, and Morgan has shown that five important nontechnical work skills can be measured by the Work Attitudes Inventory. These skills are ambition, self-control, organization, enthusiasm, and conscientiousness. This packet contains a learning module, "Speaking about Career Success," that can be used to teach these five attitudes. The module contains one lesson for each of the five job success skills. For each lesson, a discussion and a profile of either a well-known person or a fictitious person who illustrates a trait is presented, along with questions for self-discovery. The booklet is illustrated with line drawings. (KC)

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Identifying Student Perceptions of Non-Technical Workskills

By

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Presented to the Guidance Division
of the American Vocational Association Convention
Anaheim, California
December 5, 1983

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R J Cole
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

One important aspect of an individual's employability is his or her possession of certain work-related skills which are primarily neither cognitive nor psychomotor in nature, but seem to be comprised mainly of affective factors. These skills, or competencies, have been differentially labeled by various researchers (Leach and Nelson, 1978; O'Neal and Nelson, 1978; Walther, 1975, 1976; Wilson, 1973). However, they appear to comprise a loosely knit set of generic, transferable non-technical competencies (Tuft and Suzuki, 1980) which in our culture are considered necessary for long term survival in the world of work.

"Affective Work Competencies" (Kanzanas, 1978) is one term used to describe these non-technical proficiencies needed for job success. This term is used to describe factors which are thought to be a combination of work habits, values, and attitudes considered desireable in all workers. The present study uses this nomenclature because it describes the aggregate of many affective skills desired in employees by employers, and because it is tied to instrumentation for the measurement of these abilities (the Affective Work Competencies Inventory, or AWCI). Research on operational characteristics of affective work competencies has begun to yield a useful picture of how these components relate to worker behavior. Several studies (Brauchle, 1980; Petty, Kazanas, and Eastman, 1981) focused upon affective work competencies as perceived by workers and supervisors. Other efforts (Brauchle and Petty, 1982; Ferguson, 1982; Morgan, 1981) sought to teach selected attitudinal components to various groups of students. Current research (Brauchle, Petty, and Morgan, 1983) has explored the factorial dimensions of Affective Work Competencies as they are measured by Kazanas' instrument. The five non-technical work skills that were identified in this research form the basis for the Work Attitudes Inventory (WAI) discussed in this paper.

The importance of non-technical work skills in the labor force has long been recognized by industry. Wilson (1973) observed in Industrial Management that people are more likely to lose their jobs for reasons of personal qualities or general attitudes than

because of lack of technical competence or work habits. Burns (1973), and others have also found that personal traits inhibit the progress and promotion of people in organizations. Interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, social competencies, and personality traits are major influences on employee success or failure (Garbin, 1970; Bryant, 1970; Burns, 1973), and are therefore of concern to supervisors, managers, employees, and others who are involved in education and training.

Teachers and counselors of youth have a common interest in their transition into the world of work. The extent to which that transition is successful is to some degree dependent on the non-technical work skills developed by the students and the extent to which they can demonstrate these skills on the job. It is helpful to be able to measure these characteristics in students so that we can get an idea of their level of development. In this way we can do a better job of teaching students.

Identifying Non-Technical Work Skills

Recent research (Brauchle, Petty, and Morgan, 1983) has shown there to be five important non-technical work skills that are measured by the Work Attitudes Inventory (WAI). They are as follows:

1. Ambition -- a praiseworthy desire for personal advancement or preferment. It is characterized by attention to personal work and job goals, setting goals for self improvement, and seeking new skills for job advancement.
2. Self-control -- exercising self-directed restraining power over one's behavior while on the job to keep one's work behavior within normal limits of social acceptance. This skill involves maintaining an even temperament while on the job.
3. Organization -- the process of approaching work tasks so that materials, equipment, and supplies are arranged neatly and cleanly, and so the work process itself forms a coherent, organized whole.

4. Enthusiasm -- having strong excitement of feeling, liking for, or devotion to one's work. Enthusiasm is characterized by lively, eager, energetic and unflagging approach to the job.

5. Conscientiousness -- displaying behavior that indicates a sense of moral obligation for dependability and trustworthiness on the job.

As measured by the Work Attitudes Inventory, these five characteristics can give us a picture of students' work attitudes, habits, beliefs, and values. Since we know that appropriate work attitudes are highly prized in business and industry and are associated with job success, the teacher should incorporate these important concepts into the curriculum and help students improve their work attitudes. Knowledge of the students' relative strengths and weaknesses in terms of work attitudes can provide an important focus for teaching which is intended to improve performance in areas needing development. For example, if a student has trouble controlling his or her temper when dealing with others, specific activities could be planned which allow the student to interface with peers while completing a project. In this way the student is forced to get along with peers and co-workers and improve human relations skills.

Another approach to teaching good work attitudes involves the "familiarity approach", which seeks to acquaint students with important behaviors they will be expected to display on the job. The theory is that telling students what will be expected of them makes it more likely that they will be willing to learn appropriate behaviors. An example of this approach titled, "Speaking About Career Success" is attached. Research is now being conducted to investigate the effectiveness of this approach to teaching good work attitudes.

It is clear that affective work competencies and the instrument designed to measure them cannot account for all the variables that affect the transition of disadvantaged persons into the world of work. Certainly, other factors such as age, health, educational level, skill level, home environment, and the state of the economy are important. Yet, employers display rare unanimity in declaring their preference for workers with desirable attitudes, values and habits. It appears that other things being equal, the student with appropriate work attitudes will have the edge in a competitive job market. In the long run, the educational community will have to successfully address this issue in order to better serve its students.

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(RES 4)

Speaking About Career Success. . .

Learning about successful
work habits, attitudes & values

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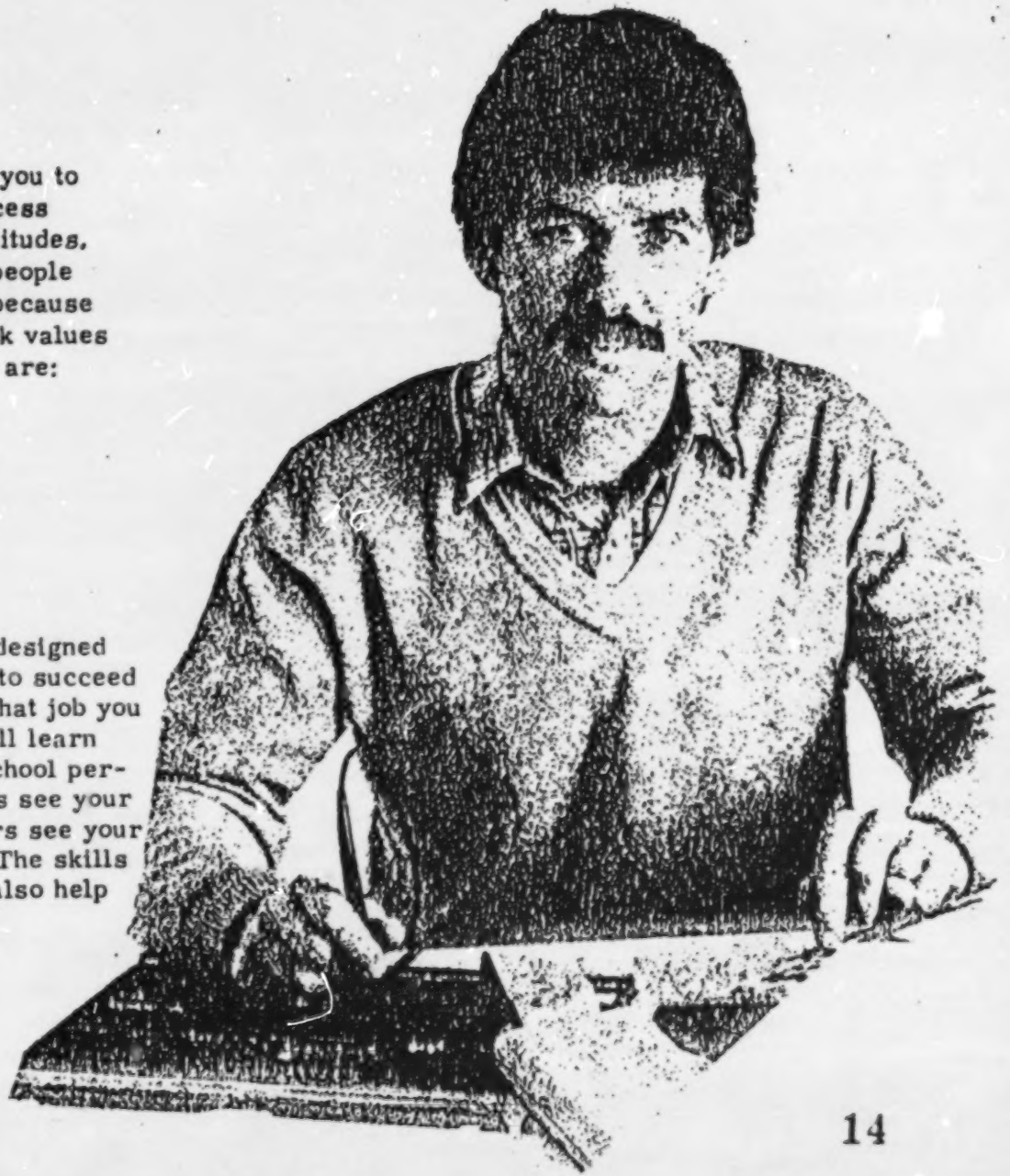
INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed to help you to recognize and use the basic job success *skills -- work values, habits and* attitudes.

Almost one-half of the working people in the United States lose their jobs because of work-related attitudes: poor work values and habits. Some examples of these are:

- ✔ carelessness
- ✔ laziness
- ✔ absence
- ✔ no initiative
- ✔ unwillingness to follow rules
- ✔ dishonesty
- ✔ troublemaking
- ✔ irresponsibility

This group of lessons has been designed to help you to increase your ability to succeed in your chosen career, no matter what job you may decide to choose. Also, you will learn skills which will help you in your school performance. Since vocational teachers see your school attitudes much like employers see your job attitudes, you come out ahead. The skills that help you to improve now, will also help you later in your job.



What makes a successful employee? A worker who is skilled in his or her particular job choice. But employers consider other kinds of skills when they choose you from other people who apply for a job. You may be surprised to discover that your promotion or chances of advancement depend on skills other than your technical job skills. Let's look at some of these other skills:

The factor that leads to job retention or advancement, is ATTITUDE. Attitude is a word that refers to how you feel and behave. There are five major factors which are the secret to a successful work career. These five factors are work attitudes employers want their successful employees to have. They are:

- ✓ambition
- ✓self-control
- ✓organization
- ✓enthusiasm
- ✓conscientiousness

These five factors will help you to get, keep, and advance in a job or career.

The material in this manual is designed to help you to recognize and use these basic job success skills- work values, habits, and attitudes.

There will be one lesson for each of the five basic job success skills mentioned above.

AMBITION

This is the quality most important to employers, supervisors, and teachers. It means a "will to succeed."

One example of this is setting personal job goals. Ask yourself these questions: "Is this the job I really want to do?" "Am I happy working in this position?" "How can I become better at what I do in my job?"

Another example of ambition in your work is setting goals for self-improvement. Employers like to see workers trying to improve themselves by learning new skills. For example, a machinist might take a welding course at night. This would show the employer that the worker has ambition to improve his or her work skills.

Learning new work skills is important for several reasons. One is to earn more, another is to be able to get a better or different job, and a third is to become better qualified, to perform better in a present job.

A third part of ambition is taking part in group activities -- learning to work with other people as part of a team. Do you enjoy working with other people to do a good job? Maybe you need to change your attitude if you want to be ambition to be successful in your career.

The following profile of LaDonna Harris is an example of an ambitious person - one who set goals in her life to achieve success.

PROFILE:
LaDonna Harris

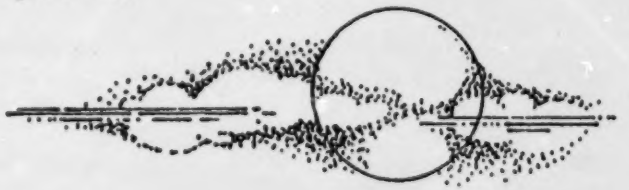
LaDonna Harris is a woman with a goal: to help the underprivileged, and in particular, the American Indians. When her husband, Fred Harris, became a United States Senator from Oklahoma, LaDonna was in a good position to move effectively toward her goal.

Born to a Comanche mother and an Irish father, LaDonna was sent to live with her Indian grandparents at a very early age. Her grandfather, Tabbytite, instilled in LaDonna a pride in her Indian heritage. All through his life, he remained a medicine man, clinging to Comanche dress and language. Her grandmother Wick-kie always wore braids, a long skirt, and a shawl. However, both grandparents realized that to be successful in life a person must be educated to understand the whole community, including both Indians and non-Indians. As their granddaughter grew up, they shared this knowledge with her.

LaDonna was loved and well-cared for by her grandparents. Many Indian children from poverty-stricken homes were sent away to government schools where they were isolated from their families and their cultural heritage. LaDonna, however, was able to attend a regular public school close to home. Like the other Indian children, she was a victim of the prejudice that chips away at their self-esteem. As she grew up, she became even more aware of the seriousness of the Indian problems - poverty, hunger, ill-health, lack of education, and loss of self-pride. Because of this, she wanted to help her people.

LaDonna feels that the best way to help Indians and other minority groups is to fight the prejudice that holds back those who are considered "different" and to provide self-help programs for the Indians. In 1965, LaDonna joined others in starting a self-help organization, called Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity, which stresses training young Indians for leadership. Later, she developed a national project, known as Americans for Indian Opportunity. This nonprofit organization helps Indians contact the right government agencies when they need advice on certain projects.

The pride LaDonna Harris has in her Indian background is evident. She is proud to be an Indian, but most important, she has a goal in life - to help her people - and she is determined to accomplish it.



THOUGHT-PROBES

You are now at an age when you are beginning to set goals. To give your life a sense of direction, you will need ambition to set goals. Answer the following questions to find out if you need to begin to set goals for the future:

1. What kind of work or career do I want?
2. Will I want to learn new skills on the job to move ahead?
3. Will I be able to work with other people?
4. Will I want to improve myself by taking extra training?

SELF-CONTROL

Self-Control is the second quality most important for the successful worker. To understand what it is, we can look at five different parts:

First, "being tolerant" - not becoming angry at others and realizing that things may not always go your way.

Second, "keeping cool" - counting to ten if necessary, but avoiding displays of physical violence, verbal abuse, quitting, or other things that mean you have "blown your stack" and may get you into a situation that you cannot avoid.

Third, "staying calm" - If you do have a confrontation with someone on the job, not staying angry, and not being hostile to other workers.

Fourth, "being stable" - trying to display an even temperament. Being predictable so that you will be easy to approach, and taking criticism. This is very important when working for a supervisor. It is their job to make sure that work is done to a certain standard. Listening to criticism and reacting by trying to improve your job performance are important parts in maintaining self-control.

Fifth, "being positive toward others" - trying to see customers, workers, and supervisors as people who are trying to help you. Others will treat you in a positive way if you assume a positive outlook.

The following profile of Michael Easton illustrates the possible results when someone loses self-control.

PROFILE:
Michael Easton

It was a dreary November morning, and Michael sat in the car waiting for his mother to pull away from the curb - and Jefferson High. Michael's mother heard him mutter, "At last I'm free."

He had just been expelled from school

because, as the principal had said to his mother, "We can no longer tolerate your son's disruptive behavior."

Michael had been a good student in grade school, winning several outstanding scholastic awards. But beginning in junior high, he had seemed to lose interest. He complained about the crowded classrooms and the "lectures without communication." He wanted to learn in high school, but felt he was not being given a fair chance.

Michael had always been interested in science and wanted a job in that field later on. He felt that the rules and requirements of the school were not giving him the background and opportunity to fulfill this goal. So the shy, studious Michael gave in to a new aggressiveness. He disturbed the English class with his "smart remarks." Also, he had skipped many classes and had been signing the attendance slips himself. In short, Michael was rebelling against the rules the school system had set up for the students to follow.

After he was expelled, the days went slowly for Michael. He had been assigned to the city's Continuation Center - a school set up for students who were unable to attend regular school for some reason. After his first interview at the Center, he said to his mother, "It's too depressing. I just don't belong there. There's no place to work, no labs, nothing."

Although Michael knew there was a law about going to school or the Center, he chose to ignore it. He decided that he would spend his time at the university library, reading science books. Soon, he became tired of that and watched television for most of the day, something he had rarely done before. As the days dragged on, he walked around the house sulking and accomplishing nothing.

Then Michael decided to get a job. But everywhere he went people asked, "Are you a high school graduate?" The only jobs he could get were counterman in a local lunchroom and stock boy in a men's hat store; not very promising careers.

Finally, the day came when Michael rushed into the family study yelling, "I've got to get back into Jefferson, Mom! I'm just wasting my time. I know now that I want to do something in science - either zoology or astronomy, I'm not sure which."

Maybe Michael was not sure yet whether he wanted to be a zoologist or astronomer, but he did know that he had to stay within the system to accomplish his goals. He was not happy with all the rules at his school, but he could try to get some of them changed by working with his teachers and friends. Michael had a goal, and now he knew how to make it come true.

THOUGHT-PROBES

Employers rank self-control as the second most important quality for successful workers. Answer the following questions to find out if you need to make an attitude change to gain self-control:

1. When I don't get my own way, am I willing to try to cooperate?
2. Do I control my temper in situations which make me very angry?
3. Do I hold a grudge when I become angry with a fellow student or worker?
4. Am I even-tempered and predictable?
5. Is my attitude positive toward workers and supervisors?

ORGANIZATION

Little can be accomplished without organization. Writing down a goal and the steps to reach that goal are important parts of becoming a successful worker.

Another part of organization is arrangement of tools and equipment. A worker cannot work efficiently in an unorganized area.

Calling yourself an organized worker means several things:

An organized worker arranges tasks in order to reach a goal.

An organized worker keeps the area where the job is performed clean. This allows efficiency and reduces the possibility of accidents. Keeping the work area clean is a job few people enjoy, but it is absolutely essential. Supervisors know this, and reward workers who pay attention to keeping areas clean.

An organized worker arranges tools and equipment in ways that others can use them when needed, and takes good care of materials used on the job.

An organized worker keeps records and files in order, keeping stock or inventory of materials that are used on the job. Losing or misplacing tools and materials costs the company money, and proves that a worker is not organized.

The following profile will help you to define one part of being an organized worker - working toward a job goal.

PROFILE:
Steve Martinez

Steve Martinez is an American citizen of Puerto Rican descent. He was born in New York and has lived there all his fifteen years. However,

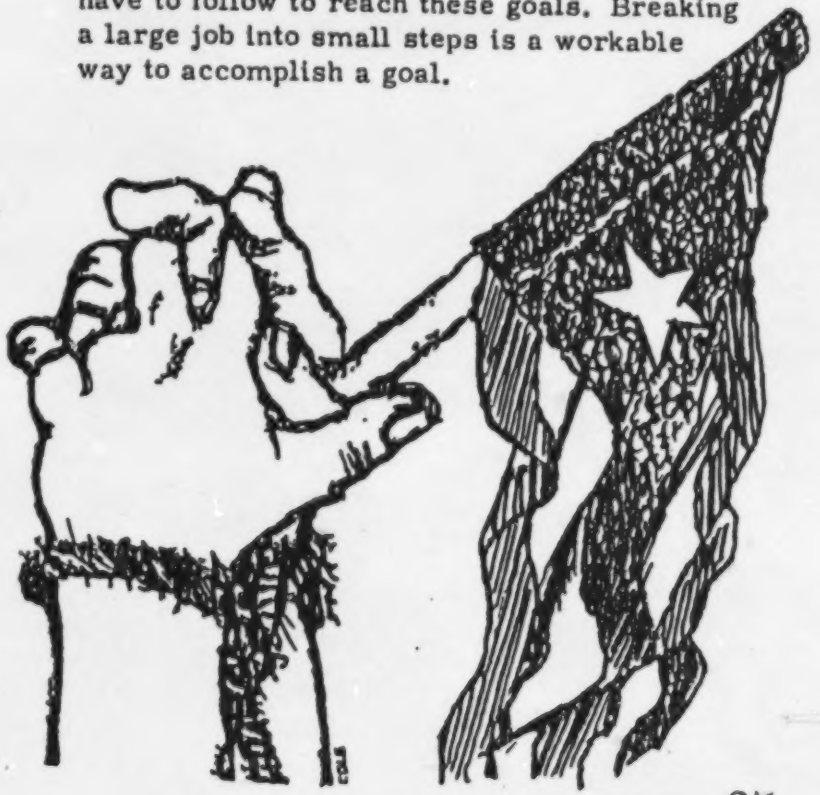
he has visited his relatives in Puerto Rico several times and has many friends there.

When Steve is of legal voting age, he will be able to vote in national elections. Although his relatives and friends in Puerto Rico are American citizens, too, they do not share this privilege. Puerto Rico is a self-governing commonwealth which is associated with the United States by its own desire and consent. Its people must obey most federal laws of this country as if Puerto Rico were a state. However, they cannot vote in U.S. Presidential elections. In addition, Puerto Rico has a Resident Commissioner in the United State Congress who has a voice in the House of Representatives, but no vote.

All this disturbs Steve. He feels strongly that since Puerto Ricans are American citizens, they should be able to vote for the man who will be their President. And, since they are subject to most federal laws, he believes their Resident Commissioner should be able to vote for or against these laws in Congress.

Steve plans to take some action, but he has not decided on the best method. He could organize a letter-writing campaign to his congressman. Or, he could circulate a petition. Another alternative Steve has considered is organizing a demonstration. He thinks this would be the most dramatic way to call attention to his cause, but he fears it might become uncontrolled.

Being organized is important to Steve, in order to reach his goal of making changes. Making a list is one way to begin. Steve needs to list his goals and the smaller steps he will have to follow to reach these goals. Breaking a large job into small steps is a workable way to accomplish a goal.



THOUGHT-PROBES

To find out if being organized is one of your strong points, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I set a goal when beginning a job?
2. Do I make a mental or written list of tasks to be completed?
3. Do I arrange my materials in an organized way?
4. Do I often forget what I am trying to accomplish?
5. Do I often lose tools and equipment?
6. Can other people work well with my methods and tools?

If you can answer "yes" to questions 1, 2, 3, & 6; you are an organized worker!

ENTHUSIASM

Go! Fight! Win! When things get hard, do you try harder or give up? If you are a worker with enthusiasm, you don't have problems - you have challenges!

Enthusiastic workers have these five qualities:

➔ ONE, they think into the future, working toward new goals, creating a stimulating atmosphere for themselves and others. They enjoy their work. They try to improve job quality, thinking of their work as a challenge to a goal - the goal is better performance.

➔ TWO, they have pride in their accomplishments. They make the job personal - they care about the quality of their performance or their product.

➔ THREE, they set new goals as old ones are fulfilled. They accept challenging assignments and put forth more than the usual effort.

➔ FOUR, they finish their assignments. They do not quit, but carry a challenge through to completion.

➔ FIVE, they adjust to change. Technology is changing daily. A worker cannot expect to stay in a job with no change. New ideas, machines, and techniques are a part of every job. Employers need workers who can change with their job, learning new techniques and ideas.

Enthusiastic workers are rare. If your goal is to be successful in your career, enthusiasm will help make you a winner!

In the following profile, you will find many of the above qualities in the work of Ralph Nader.

PROFILE:
Ralph Nader

In 1965, a book claiming that many American automobiles were "unsafe at any speed" hit the market with a bang. Its author was a young man from Connecticut named Ralph Nader. Since then, Ralph Nader's name has become synonymous with consumer protection. Thanks to his efforts, many more consumers are now getting both their money's worth and a safe product when they make a purchase. As a result of Nader's efforts, the automobile manufacturers have recalled many of their products to correct defects. Also, Congress passed a Wholesale Meat Act to bring a better quality of meat to the nation's dinner tables. Other moves in the direction of consumer protection have come from independent evaluators inspired by Nader's work, such as the reports on the nutritional values in various foods.

Ralph Nader's family came to America from Lebanon, a small country in the Middle East. They brought him up to understand that the way to protect democracy in this country is to work for justice. As a law student, Nader noted that many persons were being trained to serve as lawyers for the nation's large corporations; but,

wondered, where were the defenders of the ordinary people? As a lawyer, Ralph Nader has chosen to represent the American consumer. His watchwords are "justice" and "honesty."

Under Nader's direction and leadership, other young lawyers - known as "Nader's Raiders" - have investigated many aspects of American life. They have made studies on water pollution, the conditions of America's nursing homes, and they have studied banking to determine whether loans are too easy or too difficult to obtain.

Ralph Nader could be making a lot of money as a corporation lawyer or in private practice,

but he is dedicated to his cause. He works hard - often eighteen hours a day. He travels across the nation, speaking to students and civic groups and spreading his message of honesty and justice. Though many people call him a dreamer, Ralph Nader knows how to make his dreams come true. As he says, "I deal in the art of the possible." His dreams have helped millions to get their money's worth.

THOUGHT-PROBES

Are you an enthusiastic worker? Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I think more about the future than the past?
2. Do other people enjoy working with me?
3. Am I accomplishing goals I can be proud of?
4. Do I see problems or challenges?
5. Do I usually finish the work or assignment I begin?
6. Am I open to change: in routines, tasks, new information?

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Successful workers who are conscientious have several very definite qualities:

COOPERATION: They do not expect others to do their work, and they are not clock-watchers. They do not argue about assignments, but try to cooperate with their supervisors.

SELF-CONTROL: They mind their own business, do not disturb others who are working, and do not annoy or interrupt others.

CONCENTRATION: They do not lose interest in the job they are doing. They do not continually change from job to job.

INDEPENDENCE: Conscientious workers are "self-starters." They can work without supervision, and can be trusted to stay with a task until it is finished.

TRUST: They can be counted on to stand by their word. They show a sense of personal responsibility.

PROMPTNESS: Successful workers care about arriving on time to work and meetings. this shows others they care about their employer and their job, and that they respect other employees.

Rachel Carson brought a national problem to the attention of the American public through her sense of conscientiousness. Read the following profile about this concerned author/ scientist.

PROFILE:
Rachel Carson

For as long as she could remember, Rachel Carson had known two loves: nature, and writing. It was not until after she finished her education that she first actually saw the ocean. From then on, it was her laboratory, and she soon realized she could combine science and writing into one career.

Rachel Carson spent many years as a marine biologist for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and was chief editor of the bureau for three years. During this time, she wrote her first books about the sea. "The Sea Around Us," published in 1951, was an instant best seller and won her many honors. After this book appeared, she was named one of the ten living American authors whose works were most likely to become classics.

But her most influential work was yet to come. The inspiration for it came when two friends complained to Miss Carson that widespread anti-mosquito spraying was destroying bird life in their two-acre nature sanctuary. For the next four and a half years, Rachel Carson was busy researching the use of insecticides and writing an account of her findings.

When her book appeared in 1962, it carried the title "Silent Spring," expressing her fear that if man continued to use poisons, there might soon be a spring without the sounds of nature. She said of her work, "I wrote the book because I think there is a great danger that the next generation will have no chance to know nature as we do. . ." In "Silent Spring," Rachel Carson warned that the irresponsible use of insecticides upsets the balance of nature by destroying the food supply of animals. She called for thorough research into the effects of insecticides, and she suggested the development of other forms of control which do not involve poison.

"Silent Spring" aroused much controversy. Critics claimed that Miss Carson greatly exaggerated the situation, but studies into the effects of insecticides increased. To those who had previously assumed that because a product was on the market, it must be safe; Rachel Carson said, "It's always so easy to assume that someone else is taking care of things . . . Trusting so-called authority is not enough. A sense of personal responsibility is what we desperately need." She succeeded in calling attention to a national problem and bringing it before the American public. In city, state, and federal governments, the problems she exposed are still being studied and discussed.

THOUGHT-PROBES:

Is conscientiousness part of your work routine? Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I a clockwatcher?
2. Do I push my work onto others?
3. Do I annoy and interrupt other workers?
4. Do I jump from job to job when I am working?
5. Do I need constant supervision to finish a job?
6. Am I late to meetings and for work?

If you can answer "no" to the above questions, call yourself a conscientious worker!

SUMMARY

Values grow out of experiences. You have completed a learning module, and now should have a clearer picture of work habits, values, and attitudes of successful workers. But reading and thinking is only a part of learning. A true test of your personal work competencies: values, habits and attitudes, will happen in your work experience: on the job.

Now you can take the WAI a second time. Think about what you have learned. When you re-score your inventory, you will see if you have improved your work values, habits and attitudes!